

Healthy Relationships and Consent

YouthZone Life Skills



Healthy Relationships

Relationships are one of the most important aspects of our lives. Throughout your life, you will be a part of, create, break away or fall out of many relationships with different people. Working to ensure that your relationships are healthy has major benefits for both you and your partner/friend/family member. People engaged in healthy relationships report lower stress in life, feel a greater sense of purpose, engage in healthier behaviors such as exercising and eating better, and even have improved outcomes after surgeries and live longer. On the other hand, unhealthy relationships leave people feeling depleted, unheard, unsettled and can lead to negative life and health outcomes.

Signs of a healthy relationship:

- **Being yourself:** you feel comfortable around the person you're dating. Changing yourself to please someone else won't work in the long run and can frustrate your friends and family, so it's important to be yourself.
- **Honesty:** you feel comfortable talking about things in the relationship, including problems or concerns.
- **Good communication:** you discuss things that are important to you or your relationship. You ask each other what you're thinking and feeling and you listen to each other.
- **Respect:** you respect and support each other, and listen to each other's concerns. It's important to treat yourself with respect and say no to things that make you uncomfortable.
- **Feeling safe:** if you feel threatened in any way, you're not in a healthy relationship. Feeling safe is both emotional and physical. It's important to know that your partner won't try to hurt your feelings or your body.
- **Trust:** trust is about being able to count on someone. It's about believing that someone will be honest with you and follow through on their promises. When you trust someone, you know that they'll support you and look out for you. You have each other's best interests at heart.
- **Equality:** equality keeps relationships safe and fair. For example, being equal in a relationship means sharing the power, not bossing each other around. Equality can also mean sharing the effort. If you text or call your partner often, but they don't seem to have time for you, your relationship may be unequal.
- **Support:** support is about feeling cared for and respected. In healthy relationships, people listen to each other, help out with problems and show support by attending important events.

Instructions

Copy and paste the following questions into an email and send the answers back.

Signs of healthy relationship

- Choose one (or more) of the elements of a healthy relationship and write 200 words about a time when you have felt that, how did it affect you?
- Choose one (or more) of the elements of a healthy relationship and write 200 words about a time you did *not* feel that, how did it affect you?

Ted Talk

Watch [the difference between healthy and unhealthy relationships](#) and answer the questions below.

Ted Talk Video

- What percentage of people will experience relationship abuse in their lifetime?
- What are the five elements of unhealthy love?

Tea Video

- What is the main idea of consent?
- What does it mean that consent can be withdrawn?
- In your own words, explain this video to a friend who has never seen it.

Are you a good partner

To get started, take this [quiz](#) to get an outside assessment of your behavior in relationships. Try to be as honest as possible, this is a tool for you to see yourself. You will not be penalized if you find that you need improvement in how you relate to people-- we all do on some level. Remember to answer the questions that were provided at the beginning.

Quiz

- What score did you get?
- Did you find any questions surprising?

Love Myths

Our society has not set us up for success in dating because we are constantly bombarded by movies, tv, and advertisements that are filled with damaging messaging surrounding romantic relationships. Some ideas that need to be busted:

The Right Person will just know how you need to be loved

This myth is particularly damaging as people believe that their prince or princess will arrive and will just *know* when you need a hug, space, food, whatever. In reality, none of

us are mind readers. We must communicate to those around us what our wants and needs are. If you believe that people should just know, you will find yourself feeling unloved when in fact, your partner probably wants to know how to be a better lover, you just need to communicate.

Someone in love refuses to take no for an answer

You have seen it in any number of romantic comedies: someone (usually the guy) falls for another (usually the girl) and the girl is uninterested. Rather than respecting the woman's choice, they pester and pester until she gives in. This is portrayed as hopelessly romantic when in fact this is how abusive/stalker relationships work. There is no love at first sight, there is infatuation at first sight that can become love but you can not love someone when you don't know them. Find someone who enthusiastically wants to be with you, not someone who you have to break down. Someone in love loves someone enough to hear their answer even if it's not the answer they want.

Love has the power to heal everything

You have heard the phrase, "love makes all things possible." Love is absolutely one of the most important and powerful emotions that we are capable of feeling but it is a feeling, not magic. We like to think our love is strong enough to fix the people we share it with. But people are not DIY projects — they don't change because you want them to and won't learn to love themselves or be better simply because you love them.

The whole world should fall away and leave just you and your partner in bliss

Of course, your partner should be loving and attentive. They should want to be around you but your life is multifaceted. You have other interests, family, and hobbies. Your partner should be an addition, not a substitution to your life. You do not want to be the only good thing that has happened in your partner's life. Your relationship will be richer and more fulfilling if your partner has a fulfilling and well-rounded life.

It is the job of your partner to tear down walls

You must do work on yourself. Your walls have been put up for a reason, they are what you have used to protect yourself. The walls will come down when you do the work to bring them down. Despite what Beyonce says, the walls will not just crumble down

when you find the right person. You will do the work to tear your walls down when you are in a healthy place in your life and feel safe.

All you need is love

Love is a key foundation but with only love, relationships fall flat. A healthy relationship requires emotional stability, trust, compromise, patience, willingness to compromise and chemistry.

Consent

As important as consent is, we don't talk about it enough. So it's understandable if you're a little unsure about what it is – and what it isn't.

People typically talk about consent in the context of some kind of sexual or physical activity with a partner. In a healthy relationship, both partners are able to openly talk about and agree on what kind of activity they want to engage in. Whether it's holding hands, kissing, touching, intercourse, or anything else, it's really important for everyone in the relationship to feel comfortable with what's happening.

You may have heard the phrase “no means no.” That's totally true, but it doesn't really provide a complete picture of consent because it puts the responsibility on one person to resist or accept an activity. It also makes consent about what someone *doesn't* want to do, instead of being about openly expressing what they *do* want to do.

For another way of framing consent, **watch this [video](#)**. Answer the question at the top.

How to get consent

- The person seeking or initiating sex is responsible for getting consent
- Ask yourself if the other person is capable of giving consent.
 - If they are on drugs or drunk, asleep or unconscious, they cannot choose.
 - Some people living with a mental health problem, a disability or a head injury may not have the capacity to consent
- You can confirm you have consent by checking the other person's body language and by asking them.
- Even if you have had sex before check with them each time you start a new sexual encounter

- Look at their body language and facial expressions to see if they are eager and comfortable
- Ask them if they are okay
- If they seem unhappy, or you are not sure they are consenting, STOP
- Silence, or the absence of a no does not mean that someone has consented
- A clear, affirmative, freely-given “yes” indicates consent.

Sources

<http://www.consentiseverything.com/>

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